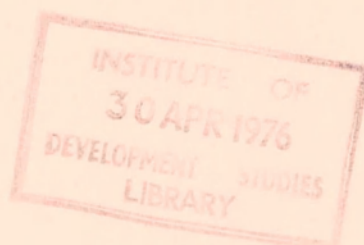


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The POLITICAL ECONOMY OF URBANISATION IN SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

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ON THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF URBANISATION IN SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

The Issue: Urban Growth and Structural Transformation in the Economy

The purpose of this paper is to present a framework for the analysis of urbanisation and development. Its aim is to provide an overview of some significant relationships between urban and economic growth over the long run. It is an attempt to link together through an examination of urbanisation in sub-Saharan Africa a major issue in economic development with some related concerns of sociological and other enquiries into modernisation and social change.

The central question with which the subsequent discussion is engaged is,

"... to differentiate urban (from) non-urban influences relevant to some conceptual framework of economic progress." (Lampard:1955)
The point of using this definition is to specify more exactly the relation in which I am interested, and to explain why I have chosen the framework of political economy in which to analyse it.

The existing literature of 'development studies' in their widest connotation has established in our imagination that the growth of a substantial population settled and active in city and town as a near-universal concomitant of economic growth and cultural change. The evidence of statistical generalisation and historical case-study is indeed impressive, linking urbanisation with industrialisation, specialisation, improved communication, the emergence of new social groups, new institutional innovations, and new inventions and ideas. The rise of the city has been traced through its historical, cultural, technical, social, economic and political dimensions and its pride of place as a focus for developmental processes repeatedly emphasised. With regard to the situation of contemporary Africa however, there has appeared a growing body of thought and writing which gives free reign to the suspicion of other possibilities. Contrary to imported ideas and generalisations from elsewhere it is claimed that urban growth is no longer reflecting local economic progress; the demographic expansion of urban areas is exceeding the ability or need of African countries (and others in the third world) to 'accommodate' prevailing rates of growth. By accommodation is meant not only the provision of shelter and other physical facilities, but also and equally, the provision of employment opportunities and urban community services. Symptoms of gross deficiencies in all these aspects of urban development are increasingly cited, frequently with reference to the fact that such deficiencies are continuing to grow in magnitude despite increasing efforts to the contrary. Thus, the fastest expanding urban areas seem to suffer the most from a lack of physical facilities, traffic congestion, environmental blight, overcrowded housing and 'squatter' settlement, a high rate of unemployment and social maladjustment - all hardly conducive to greater savings, enterprise, productive investment or receptivity to rapid social change.

Much if not most of the relevant literature, including that on urbanisation, has so far been divided between two powerful, separated but not unrelated, groups of studies, which may for convenience be referred to as 'growth' studies and studies of 'modernisation'. Studies in economic growth are principally concerned with those subjects relating in the end to raising the level of per capita incomes for the population of a country or countries. It is now usual to say however that 'development' is only very partially and inadequately represented by growth in aggregate income levels *par se*. More fundamental seem to be a series of related changes in a community's attitudes and institutions which are taken up in social and political modernisation. The extension of commercialism, contract relations and supporting social ties; the rise of indigenous industrial enterprise;

the expansion of education and establishment of a rational bureaucracy and effective administration; and the integration of different areas through a system of specialised exchange based on efficient transport and communications. These are all much appreciated aspects of 'laying the foundations'.³ The balance of studies of urbanisation is at the present time heavily weighted in favour of 'modernisation' approaches to the subject. As will be mentioned later, there are few growth orientated works directly concerned with urban development par se, though many more dealing with topics which have a rather close interconnection with such development. The canon on urbanisation in Africa is dominated by investigations into attitudes, institutions and social change.

It has been argued by Hirschman and others⁴, that both growth and modernisation are equally subject to, but also capable of initiating change which weakens, the constraints imposed by the other, or rather the lack thereof. Nor is it necessary to assume a balance between advances in many different directions all of which are growth-promoting or conducive to modernisation. Transferred into the field of urban development, it can be said that on the one hand, urban expansion may contribute to economic growth amidst conditions of social disorganisation and physical deterioration, and on the other, so-called excessive urbanisation may provide a stimulus for succeeding development efforts. Unfortunately, a priori, the opposite may equally well be posited. What is required is a more exact formulation and a correspondingly relevant framework which will allow the separating out of one series of significant relationships from their surrounding context.

Here is where the quotation from Lampard's pioneering essay becomes important. What is needed is 'a conceptual framework of economic progress' which directs attention to that aspect of the development process for which urbanisation is most easily identified as having major influence in Africa. Such a framework is not easily available from either growth or modernisation approaches par se. The great majority of growth models neither have an 'urban' sector, nor regard urban areas as included within the behavioural classifications of individuals, firms and government. The great majority of investigations into social and political change as related to urban development have more to say on the consequences of the latter in their own sphere than in that of economic growth. A better prospect is offered by the conception of progress embodied in the framework lying mid-way between the just mentioned pair, the framework of 'political economy'.

For this purpose it is useful to quote a dictionary definition of the term used in a recent comment on the subject by a leading political scientist (Coleman:1967), i.e.,

"an eighteenth century branch of the art of government concerned with directing policies towards the promotion of wealth of government and the community a nineteenth century social science comprising modern economics but principally concerned with governmental as contrasted with commercial economics a modern social science dealing with the interrelationship of political and economic process"

Each of these notions has its place in defining the usefulness of political economy in regard to the present issue. The first reminds us of the tradition of enquiry and action paying principal attention to the long-term accumulation of the 'Wealth of Nations'. The second emphasis points up the concern with government economics, with its contemporary counterpart in planning and the social cost-benefit calculus. The third highlights a pre-bailing and mounting concern with the subject of 'development administration' lying at the crossroads between economic and political considerations.

At the centre of our concept of economic progress then is the idea of a mechanics which works to create a surplus which can be used for investment to generate an expansion in productive capacities, given their broadest connotation, leading in turn to a long-run movement away from an initial low-level equilibrium towards the assumption of 'self-sustained' growth. This mechanics is here referred to as the 'structural transformation' of the economy. Further, this mechanics has a more and more obvious connection with deliberate planning activities on the part of government as recent history has unfolding, revealed the impact of past developments; with a consequent rise in importance of those in and serving the 'public sector' who are responsible for the technical and administrative policies and standards arising out of greater government intervention. (Parsons:1958)

This idea of economic progress as structural transformation may be further elaborated in respect of the specific initial conditions of development over most of sub-Saharan Africa. For over most of the continent the economic growth and societal modernisation that have taken place have not been brought about by a self-directed movement away from prevailing conditions by indigenous peoples. They are the result, rather, of a wholesale superimposition of modern economic, social and political organisation from outside upon indigenous cultures. New sectors of economy, new social institutions and new political groups have emerged, and quickly been advanced to high levels of productivity and modernity. They have however raised in their wake a series of 'discontinuities' with the larger part of national societies, which find expression in the ways of speaking about development in Africa: of 'enclaves' and 'elites', of dual economies and plural societies. In this situation, the structural transformation of the economy required to assure self-sustained growth consists of two reinforcing movements; the movement away from subsistence towards commercial production in the 'modern' sector of the economy, and the move away from an external orientation towards greater domestic interdependence between the sectors in the 'modern' economy. These movements in turn, if they are to lead the economy over the long-run to self-sustained progress, must be sustained by a process of accumulation and investment related to the same ends; i.e. the expansion of the modern sector of the economy from an initially narrow bridgehead to encompass the greater part of production and the great majority of the population, together with the displacement of the export-sector 'enclave' by internal or interterritorial bases of specialisation and exchange. The crucial role to be played by government and the critical importance of an effective development administration in African countries is made plain through successive planning initiatives and bureaucratic innovations.

The issue to be confronted may now be stated as the extent and direction of impact upon the mechanics of structural transformation of patterns of urban development in sub-Saharan Africa. In particular, what is the effect of urbanisation as it is now proceeding upon capital accumulation and, more important, upon the allocation of investment? What are the relationships between urban development, government planning strategies and development administration? And what are the changes in conditions and policies that would most quickly lead to an enhanced role for urban growth in the overall development process as here conceived?

Before these issues can be explored however, some attention must be paid to elucidating the first part of our definitive quotation, i.e. the differentiation of that which is properly 'urban' from other elements in the situation which have only an urban connection. For example, the effect on structural transformation of developments towards industrialisation must be separated out from those of urban development, though most large-scale industry may indeed be found in the larger urban areas of a country. In a

similar way, the impact of a particular political ideology must not be equated with an urban influence, however much urban based is the government group that espouses it. Nonetheless, there are close connections between urbanisation, industrial structure, external trade orientation, social stratification, civil service attitudes, etc, which arise from the character of an urban 'environment' to which all the above elements and others contribute something and are in turn affected by all the rest. Urbanisation in the context of development is a multivariable phenomenon, having the nature of a 'factor' in the statistical analytic sense of that term. This is to say that some part of characteristic economic, social and political arrangements are reflected in and reinforced by the prevailing urban milieu, but by no means all. What will be attempted is to pick out some salient features of the urban 'factor' in growth and change, and analyse their bearing on the mechanics of economic progress as they are working, or perhaps not working, in the African case.

The Background: Urban Economics and Empirical Evidence in the African Case

An attempt to relate the urban factor to the mechanics of structural transformation in sub-Saharan Africa at this point in time is at best a hazardous and precarious undertaking. In the first place, there is a high degree of theoretical imprecision which stems at least in part from the lack of a tradition of interest in urban economics by the mother discipline. As the author of a major exploratory work in this field put it, (Thompson:

1965) "Economics is the last of the social sciences to recognise the city as an important unit for classification and analysis. Much of the literature (that can be construed as) urban economics has been written by geographers, sociologists and city planners. Apart from the handful (in the field of) urban land economics, few mainstream practitioners have moved into the heart of the city as their central preoccupation."

In the second place, this theoretical gap is little ameliorated by any coherent body of work dealing with the lessons of the past. As one contributor has appraised the situation recently, (Lampard:1966)

"At a time when urbanisation is preceeding rapidly throughout the world, knowledge with man's past experience with urban life is severely limited. This is notably true for the industrial period since the eighteenth century. To be sure there is a large literature ... but owing to the fragmentary nature of this work such studies have provided little cumulative knowledge."

Thirdly, without a firm theoretical basis, there is a not inconsiderable uncertainty that what has been gathered from the past, especially when transformed into the guise of structural or statistical regularities, has real relevance to present conditions in other places. As has already been pointed out, (by Vernon and Hoover:1965)

"The circumstances (now) prevailing at the birth of new cities ;;; in developing countries, differ from anything observed previously. Swift transportation is now available both within and between cities: short-distance and face-to-face communications have an unprecedented importance in urban activities: and external economies of scale and complementarity are more critical to productive specialisation. Hence there is little reason to suppose that city development will follow past patterns."

Such weaknesses in theoretical underpinnings and historical perspectives throws a correspondingly heavy burden onto studies and data referring to contemporary experience in sub-Saharan Africa. There is now a quite substantial body of works on urbanisation on the continent, as in other areas largely contributed by geographers and sociologists, but there are few studies indeed which deal in any way with the systematic relations between

urban growth and economic progress either on a continental or a country basis. The exceptional and outstanding works can be numbered on the fingers of two hands (and each finds its place in subsequent discussion). This paucity of substantive investigations is reasonably reflected in the tone of doubtful certainty with which much of the succeeding argument is made.

The examination of the broad empirical relationships between development and urbanisation over the continent serve to confirm the lack of any firm statistical basis for predicting any kind of causal link between the two. The available data with which to compare urban growth and economic progress is still uneven in coverage, definition and reliability. However, in the course of a recent survey, a considerable body of information was pieced together which allows some fair degree of approximation. The result is fairly unequivocal. Defining economic progress by means of a multivariable statistical index of relevant variables, and urbanisation by its demographic reflection, little or no positive correlation between the two is obtained.

It is true in Africa, as elsewhere, that at the lowest levels of development there are found only tiny fractions of a population in urban centres, as in Mali or Malawi. Conversely a quite high level of economic progress is associated with a quite high level of urbanisation, as in S. Africa. Most sub-Saharan African countries are to be found however either 'over' or 'under' urbanised relative to their respective economic progress. Countries like Congo(B) and Senegal fall in the first category, and Cote d'Ivoire and the Sudan in the second. Whatever degree of 'cross-sectional' relationship can be found however is hardly confirmed by estimated changes over time. Again, both the most and the least urbanised countries in sub-Saharan Africa show converse rates of urban growth - the slowest and the fastest respectively - but this must be put down to the properties of percentage calculations over base magnitudes. Inbetween the two extremes lies almost random confusion. Some relatively 'over' urbanised states showing compensatory slow rates of growth (Gambia) while others have accelerating increases (Libya); similarly some 'under' urbanised states have high rates of increase (Cote d'Ivoire) while others are not catching up at all (Congo (K)). What such statistics reflect are a number of 'intervening' variables of a structural and functional nature which it is our intention to examine in the following sections.

The Analysis: Ideal Types and Levels of Appraisal

One way of introducing the analysis of a relationship when more detailed structural and statistical relationships have yet to be discovered is by means of making up polar opposites as ideal types, pure cases where one extreme or the other in the form of the relationship is considered. In the present case, it may be relevant to sketch in brief the kinds of urbanisation that would be least and most conducive to accelerating the process of structural transformation, rather on the lines of the dichotomy of 'generative and parasitic cities' already introduced into the literature. (Hoselitz:1960) In the present case we might refer to 'structurally conservative' and 'structurally radical' forms of urbanisation.

Structurally conservative urban development would in the extreme case produce only one urban centre, the capital city. The capital would have as its economic base the processing of all local primary production for export, the manufacture of all local consumer goods from imported inputs, and the whole of the 'modern' sector of commerce, transport and the service sectors. It would be the seat of government, the headquarters of the political party(s) and the workplace for almost all bureaucrats and administrators and technical personnel. Capital formation would be financed out of government taxes on exports and imports and from commercial profits derived in large part

from favourable terms of trade with the rest of the country. Investment would be largely devoted to providing production capacity for consumer goods and to equipping the capital with a significant area of modern building and a high level of urban infrastructure. The majority of directly productive activities would be employing orthodox capital-intensive technology with a larger, but still small, labour force in government employment and the service sectors. The demand for labour in the modern sector of the urban economy would be inelastic with regard to production increases, while both population growth and low productivities in the rural areas would encourage migration to the capital of unskilled and uneducated people. A high level of un- and underemployment would persist, and few if any of the migrants would be absorbed into the productive activities of the city, or be able to initiate anything in the way of small-scale enterprise. More and more of the poorer immigrants would live as 'displaced persons' in the margins of the city in deteriorating physical and social circumstances, but still attracted by the possibility of some day joining their more fortunate urban elite. Unfortunately those in government as well as private sectors who were making major policy decisions on economic and technical matters would be equally remote from both rural and peri-urban problems and needs, and would tend to reinforce the existing 'enclave' situation. While in overall terms and in the short run the economy might appear to be growing fast, there would be no fundamental structural transformation or positive reallocation of the investible surplus leading to an expansion and re-orientation of production and employment in the country as a whole.

Structurally radical urban development is posited as lying at the opposite extreme. Here there would be some degree of distribution of the urban population over the country concerned reflecting the productive capacities and needs for integration of different areas. The economic base of urban centres would vary according to their size and location, but would include much internal exchange of local foodstuffs for local manufactures based on local inputs plus a variety of 'semi-modern' activities in industry, trade, transport and construction relying on locally initiated 'intermediate' technologies. In each urban centre, depending on its importance, there would be found representatives of both government and party(s) together with a strongly orientated group of field administrators. Capital formation would be financed to a greater degree out of local income and corporation taxes. Investment allocation would be weighted in favour of some critical capital-goods production sectors, but even more in favour of rural development and the provision of urban services and facilities to consolidate that development. The combination of a rise in the proportion of urban activities of a 'quasi-modern' type with a rise in rural productivities and employment opportunities would reduce the disbalance between urban labour demand and supply while the rise of a number of centres would widen the urban labour market and multiply the opportunities for immigrant initiative in small-scale enterprise. The gap between the modern urban sector and the rest of the economy being progressively reduced, the gradual absorption of recent immigrants into the urban milieu would be much assisted. This situation would be further supported by the thinking and action of relevant government agencies and administrations more closely attuned to the realities of rural and urban living in the various different areas and towns of the nation. Structural transformation, powered by the reallocation of investible resources in the appropriate directions, would rapidly begin to further reinforce the above pattern.

These quick general sketches of course leave much to be desired. On the one hand they are not really very specific in content, and on the other may convey an impression of one element in the situation which may not be either a necessary or sufficient component of one 'type case' or the other. The main object however is served by laying emphasis upon the

kinds of consideration that are needed to establish the impact of urban development upon long-run economic progress.

In order to assess the present state of African urbanisation in respect of its impact on structural transformation between the two polar cases sketched in above, it is necessary to disaggregate the problem into a number of separate though closely connected components. Some elements in the situation may better be appraised at one 'level' of analysis, while others need a different level. Three such levels of analysis may be distinguished for the better appreciation of the links between urban and economic growth, namely,

- 1) the Urban 'Sector'
- 2) the Urban 'Hierarchy' and
- 3) the Urban 'Centre'

The first and most aggregative level of analysis centres around the growth and structure of the urban 'sector' as a whole. This is the level where most current discussions are phrased in terms of concepts of over-urbanisation, optimal growth rates for the urban population, and the generative or parasitic character of urban expansion. The second level of analysis centres around the distribution of urban centres of varying size at any given level of overall urban sector growth, and is the level where discussion goes normally in terms of concepts of decentralisation, external agglomeration economies of scale, and the costs of service provision in urban areas. The third level of analysis centres around the growth and ecology of the individual urban centres, where most current discussion concerns such things as thresholds of expansion, urban housing and community, the stability and commitment of urban residents, and other related concerns. The following sections will treat each of these levels in turn, focussing in each case on those considerations which may assist in the more complete and coherent evaluation of urbanisation as a factor in development.

The Economics of Urban Sector Expansion

Our task when pursuing the discussion at urban sector level is to indicate where possible the direct and indirect supply and demand relations between that sector and the rest of the economy; and to examine the effect of prevailing patterns of urban structure and expansion on the creation of new resources for investment and the allocation of such investment. We begin with the static situation.

The examination of direct structural relationships, i.e. between current production, income and expenditure, would be greatly assisted by the availability of 'input-output' type accounts specifically isolating the urban sector. There could then be calculations of multiplier and leakage effects in the structure of the economy produced by that sector, which could be precisely evaluated against some programming values for foreign exchange savings, or enhancement of investment capacities, etc. Unfortunately no such accounting systems have yet been adopted in African countries, and except for one or two pioneering efforts (McLoughlin:1963, Barber:1967) there is little in the way of empirical evidence of any sort.

As previously mentioned, the present structural characteristics of most African economies reflect a situation of simple productive activity in a predominantly 'open-ended', i.e. externally dependent framework. The displacement of subsistence output and external trade by greater domestic commercial interchange has as yet not proceeded very far. The structure of production in urban sectors of the economy has contributed in most cases to the extension of production for the market and to the replacement of certain classes of imports by home supplies. However, the current internal

demographic and economic structure of the urban sector in most African countries has resulted in a non-proportional increase in domestic commercial production as against overall urban growth. The nonproportionality arises from two principal sources. First, the urban sector at present is heavily weighted towards commerce, services and government with only a small proportion of manufacturing in final sector output. Second the socio-economic status of urban populations can usually be divided by a line which separates the large majority of relatively low-income earners from a small but influential minority of those with high incomes and correspondingly different tastes. These circumstances generally serve to limit the expansion of local foodcrop agriculture and local consumer-goods manufacture because of a lack of effective demand from the majority of those engaged in the large tertiary sectors of the urban economy, and the high import propensities of the higher income group. The urban economy has a more substantial generative impact on the construction sector, and upon the sectors producing utility services, but the directly productive activities are not equally stimulated. These circumstances are undoubtedly a part of the colonial legacy, but so long as they persist they continue to impair the effect of the urban sector on the economy at large while contributing, as we shall¹² see to maintaining high costs to the community for further urban expansion.

Still more critical is the impact of urban growth on the creation and use of new resources - on the accumulation of capital, increasing labour productivity, encouraging entrepreneurial innovation, and directing investment allocation. Again in all these cases the contemporary pattern of urban sector activities has exerted a braking effect on growth while at the same time making large demands on newly available capacities. The relatively small industrial component in the urban economy, the small scale of the majority of commercial and service enterprises, the expenditure habits of the urban elite groups, and the still strong rural ties of a large section of the low-income urban workers, rates of saving and levels of investment remain severely limited. Substantial proportions of incomes generated in urban areas are sent abroad, expended in conspicuous consumption, or remitted to rural areas for the purchase of consumer goods and the settling of social obligations as well as farm improvement. The small industrial sector often being rather capital intensive in its techniques, and the majority of occupations in the tertiary sectors being unskilled, the often still prevalent management responses in urban sector activities have led to a limited degree of 'enskillings' for an urban labour-force whose commitment to wage employment is weakened by 'environmental' conditions to be remarked on below. Neither the structure of the urban economy, nor the former preponderance of non-indigenous enterprise has made it easy for local business to expand from the periphery of modern production even in small-scale service provision. At the same time, very considerable demands for scarce capital funds are made by the need to provide the urban sector with requisite social overhead facilities; while urban administration and technical services make similar demands on scarce high-level manpower.¹³

The limited reinforcement provided by the urban sector to improvement and expansion in the non-urban economy, and in the supply of resources and factors of production must also be placed beside the prevailing tendencies to aggravate the characteristics of the urban economy by government policy. It is clear that the 'economics of nationalism' (Johnson:1965) has its most important diversionary effects in the urban sector. It is largely in this sector that the middle and higher income groups will operate on the expanded opportunities provided for them by localisation policies: it is largely in the urban sector that nationalisation of expatriate enterprises will take place; and it is largely in the urban sector that the monuments to a new nationhood will be found, leaving the doubtful compensation of 'psychic satisfactions' for the mass of the rural population regarding independence.

There is in contrast as will be made clear when discussing planning, usually no clearly defined 'urban policy' covering the expected role of the urban sector or of government measures to relieve some of the inherited impositions on scarce resources. Only quite recently and in some countries has there appeared the beginnings of a review of urban development which may lead to a more widespread study of the costs and benefits of certain features of the situation. What have been described as the 'sets of physical and organisational facilities that administer to the needs and wants of the population for economic, cultural, and political services' which make up the urban sector (Spengler:1967) have yet to come under systematic examination from the point of view of our present concern.¹⁴

The Economics of Urban Size and Distribution

Pursuing the discussion at urban hierarchy level it is necessary to indicate where possible the effects on structural transformation capacities of two important disaggregate aspects of urban growth; the impact of various sizes of urban agglomerations and their relative proportion of total urban growth, and the impact of various distributions of urban places and their relative concentration in one or other parts of a country.

In many African countries the pattern of urban development is currently marked by a high degree of distributional 'skewness', one or two large cities dominating the urban hierarchy of places. This is in accordance with a number of tendencies that are an inherent part of economic progress: many kinds of non-agricultural production will be concentrated initially in one or a few units of production given the small size of the market: these units will tend to congregate in one or two places which have 'initial' advantage in possibly resource endowment, denser population, good communications et.al.: and these places will become steadily more attractive with the acquisition of 'acquired' advantages like a pool of at least semi-skilled labour, good commercial services, and a number of other so-called external economies of scale. Indeed there tends to operate a reinforcing 'ratchet effect' (Thompson:1965) whereby once having reached a certain minimum size an urban place will carry on expanding except in the most drastic circumstances. The result in African conditions is the 'primate' metropolis, the single extensively diversified centre of production, the site of enormous 'frozen' capital assets in basic service provision, the dominant domestic market centre, the focus of new industrial and other initiatives, and the home of the major political power base in the state. Only a radical structural change could begin to stem this irreversible collection of advances, which are however themselves hardly likely to encourage such a movement.

Though much of the discussion that has taken place over the question of urban development in Africa and elsewhere has concerned the problem of urban size and its 'optimisation' this is in fact only a limited part of the whole field, as this essay sets out to show. The problems of physical and social conditions facing urban immigrants for example is more effectively dealt with when considering the urban centre: the overall impact of patterns of urbanisation is more effectively dealt with in the previous section. What is at issue here is the relationship between size of urban places and both efficiency of production and the costs of servicing that production. Unfortunately this question cannot be answered from African experience, because there are little or no comparative data on these subjects for the continent. Nevertheless, the results of discussion and investigation elsewhere does seem to have some relevant aspects (Spengler:1967) though their may be considerable uncertainty of exact generalisations.

The present state of knowledge may be summed up shortly as follows. Possibilities of advanced specialisation giving opportunities for a high degree of industrial and commercial diversification and for the appropriation of firm economies of scale may be achieved in urban agglomerations of 200,000 or so, given the level of overall development that would be needed to support such a diversity and scale of activities in the first place. The subsequent addition of even more highly complex branches of production with their related specialist facilities means that external economies of agglomeration would remain to be appropriated above this figure, but the usual upper limit would still be not more than twice this size, in any case below 500,000. Though a decrease in the minimum efficient size of unit makes it possible for this unit to be accommodated in a smaller city, it is often found that small plants cluster in the midst of a highly articulated network of ancillary establishments needing a large urban area. Economies of scale in the provision of municipal services such as police fire and refuse collection, do not appear to be significant above a city size of perhaps 100,000+. Economies of scale in urban 'infrastructure' such as electricity, water and sewerage, may however not be fully exhausted below a population of triple the size, between 250-350,000. Other economies, such as from an industrialised building system or access by mass transit, may contribute to pushing up optimal sizes to nearer a half-million, but increasing densities, higher land values, congestion, and higher construction costs will exert a downward bias in many respects. Given the present size of many of Africa's largest cities, when considered against prevailing levels of overall development, it is clear that in many cases such economies of agglomeration as are to be realised on present evidence would not support the continued expansion of such cities to their present sizes, however these are construed.

At the same time, as elsewhere, most African countries have developed a hierarchy of urban places which has an equally skewed geographical dispersion. The urban pattern has been affected progressively selective migration which has tended to concentrate rural-urban movements from the whole country on to one or a few major centres. The lack of investment and technical progress in agriculture beyond a small area of cashcropping has meant a lack of employment opportunities and low income levels on the land. Many migrants will therefore move to the cities, or rather to the city, over long distances. The nature of the 'big-city' as it will be dealt with subsequently, ensures that many migrants will find it difficult to get integrated into the urban milieu and will retain an essentially ambivalent attitude and status. Circumstances in the ecology of urban centres of large size militate against the acquisition in a short time of needed skills and organisation for self-supporting enterprise above a petty level. The present pattern of movement however, both indicate and aggravate the apparent failure of smaller urban centres to expand and attract in a similar manner to their big brothers. Over very large areas of a country therefore, there is only the most limited local outlet for local production and manpower. Concurrently the distance between the capital and elite groups and traditional rural society becomes more difficult to cross in both directions. Peasants seeking a quasi-permanent situation in the city must overcome a higher threshold of needed education and experience: while government or independent initiatives seeking a response among the mass of the people are up against persistent isolation and backwardness.

This situation is further reinforced by the systematic tendencies to a high degree of centralisation in the configuration of national 'entrepreneurial, administrative and intellectual space' (Friedman:1961). The businessman, the civil servant, and the academic, all accommodated in the capital and the larger urban areas in the most developed regions of the country have in general a tendency to underestimate possibilities for

productive effort and investment in, and overestimate the drawbacks to accommodation of those regions of the country where closer investigation would show significant returns were to be had. The difficulty of getting effective administrative penetration into the rural areas and villages is often partly aggravated by the absence of any 'intermediate centres',¹⁵ between the country and the capital. The current hierarchy of urban places is ill-adapted to the task of reallocation of the surplus in ways which might produce the widespread expansion and integration of the domestic commercial economy which we have associated with structural change.

The Economics of Urban Form and Ecology

Pursuing the discussion at the level of the individual urban centre our concern is to indicate the impact of two related aspects of what might be thought of as urban 'design' in its broadest aspect. On the one hand there is the question of prevailing costs of accommodating urban populations and activities; on the other the question of the relationship of different parts of the urban area with respect to socioeconomic adaption.

The most significant point to note in this connection is that for a considerable time the extent and quality of urban facilities has been the subject of determination by architects, engineers and city treasuries assisted by national government agencies and outside expertise. This has been conducive to overlooking certain principles such as paying regard to recurrent as well as capital costs when comparing alternative designs. In particular, a higher quality of accommodation and facilities than can be paid for out of current incomes will lead to adverse shifts in use-patterns and/or hidden subsidisation. Thus the capital cost of building one-story detached houses may be considerably less than for multi-story blocs, but costing of services and maintenance plus personal and commodity travel, may alter the evaluation. In the same way, the provision of high-cost residential accommodation of any kind, involving rent levels above the level of current disposable income for housing will force either inadequate spending on other commodities, or more likely excessive use through overcrowding, or gross subsidisation involving high opportunity costs of spending on alternative facilities.

There are few or no cost estimates for 'town building' in Africa which would enable some per capita cost variation to be assessed. Nonetheless, through work in other countries (Stone:1962) it is possible to gauge something of the magnitude of investments involved so as to be in a position to apply a cost sensitivity analysis to the current practice of urban development in African countries. Using then figures which are derived from U.K. experience, the estimated hypothetical cost of accommodating from scratch and urban population of 100,000 with its concomitant activities and services would be some £105m. or about £2500 per capita. The breakdown of this cost is roughly as follows:

	%
Housing (approx. 30,000 units)	45
Commercial and Public Building	9
Factories and Warehouses	13
Educational Establishments	6
Roads and associated facilities	11
Public Utilities	9
Recreational facilities etc	5
Other expenditures	2

The largest element of cost, for housing the population, is also the one most susceptible to major cost variation. For example an increase in floor-space per person by 10% can be added with an extra cost of only 5%.

Doubling the number of persons per dwelling with a single basic facility for cooking and washing may decrease costs per person by 25% or more. The provision of individual utility connections - lighting, water and sanitation - may add a fifth to the cost of a dwelling. Building above ground level will add usually 10% or so per story in construction costs. The costs of public buildings and commercial premises will vary depending on building standards and densities. Factories and schools will vary according to the activities performed in them. The major differences in the costs of roads and utility systems are caused by the complexity of the terminal installations, the articulation of the distribution system and the density of occupation. It is estimated that the cost of surfaced road provision per house varies through a fivefold difference in estates of between 50 and 10 dwellings per acre. Road construction costs can vary from perhaps £50,000 per km. for the improvement of a two lane tarmac road to £.75m. per km. for a six-lane motorway standard.

What is clear from even the most cursory inspection of African cities is that the standards of design have been little altered from those made applicable after European models in the colonial era. The costs of urban development are raised accordingly to levels little consonant with surrounding economic realities. In some areas, for some projects however, it has been demonstrated what a huge difference can be made by the minimisation of municipal public expenditures, and the maximisation of self-help from the urban community. Further, it is a fact that local conditions of site, topography, existing urban form etc, will critically affect the costs of further expansion in different cities and towns; yet without a national urban allocation programme it is often the case that expansion takes place in centres where costs are the highest at the margin.

It is also at the margin - in the geographical sense - of the city that the ecological pattern of contemporary urbanisation in Africa becomes important for the assessment of economic progress. The older ideas about deplorable 'slum' areas that were a strictly temporary and negative sign of overurbanisation have now given away to a more exact appreciation of the possible function of 'transition areas' from rural to urban activity (Frankenhoff:1967). The issue here is one of efficient transformation within the city structure itself. Much of the quasi- and semi-modern sector of the urban economy, providing at least a limited expansion in the domestic interchange system, is carried on in peri-urban areas. Certainly many of the capacities to undertake more advanced economic activities are forged in slum communities. In most cases however the adverse terms of trade between wage labour and urban consumption goods of all kind makes the slum dweller a precarious urbanite cherishing close ties with a rural home area. There are few signs of either private or public enterprise initiative in the upgrading of these areas and communities to the point at which self generating advances could be anticipated. At this level too, the urban pattern has provided the first elements of change and the first opportunities for progress, but subsequent developments have tended to consolidate rather than expand these possibilities.

The Planning Process in Urban Development

The largest cities in Africa are growing at a rate far surpassing that of most of the developed countries. Yet the town planning which had its origins in the latter is now uniformly applied to the former. The result has been that orthodox town planning procedures - land use zoning, density controls, building regulations, etc, - have had little effect on the most critical problems of expansion in individual cities, and none at all of the urban sector as a whole. Conventional 'master plans' often prepared by exatriate experts specially imported for the purpose, have taken

months or years to produce, and have often been outpaced by events. In many cases technical reports of this kind are never given official status and are left as monuments to irrelevant enterprise. Local town planning organisations, with a lack of trained personnel and resources are spending much of their time trying to control patterns of urban land development in accordance with often outdated schemes which in any case have little provision for the real needs of a substantial proportion of the urban population. The present technical and administrative framework of urban planning is all too often inflexible, uneconomic and therefore ineffective in pointing out feasible alternatives bearing in mind the priority need for rapid economic progress.

As has already been remarked this situation continues under the absence of any significant measure of policy determination by governments concerning the role, the distribution and the standards of urban development. Without given priorities and resources there is little initiative to re-orientate present planning practices towards the calculation of more reasonable cost allowances and performance standards for directing urban growth.

This brings us to the crux of the issue at hand. If urban development is to be made more attuned to the requirements of structural transformation there needs to be a more active and interventionist approach to urban planning than that which at present exists. A series of programmes with a set of priority tasks and time-schedules for each major aspect of urban expansion is required. The aim has to be the maximum return for budgeted expenditures in terms of,

- a. the impact of urban sector activities on other domestic production;
- b. the impact of the urban hierarchy on the stimulation of local resources and responses to investment opportunities;
- c. the impact of urban design on the encouragement of non-public enterprise and self-supported activities

If this is to happen then urban and economic planning will have to be placed hand in glove in order to produce a mutual recognition of needs and strategies. If this discussion has any point it is to show how when this is not the case urban development may come to be as much a hindrance as a help to overall progress in countries which cannot afford to overlook any source of untapped potential.

Notes

- 1 There are very many references in the now voluminous literature Kuznets:1963 gives a good statistical-structural review
- 2 a considerable proportion of this literature has emerged from the U.N. for example see U.N.:1962
- 3 probably the best survey of the work and thinking involved here is that edited by Hoselitz and Moore for UNESCO: 1963
- 4 principally in two books by Hirschman, but see his article in Econ. Dev.&Cul.Change in references
- 5 the notion of structural transformation is mentioned in several works analysing the development process, but see the conference proceedings edited by Goldsmith:1959
- 6 for one approach to structural transformation in the African context see the first sections of Arrighi and Saul:1967
- 7 on the critical role of government in development in Africa see among others Coleman:(1964
- 8 for a brief explanation and application of statistical factor analysis see Hamman:1962
- 9 undertaken by the author and M.I.S.R. on behalf of the U.N.
- 10 for further explanation see Berry:1960
- 11 urban population defined as total living in towns of 20,000 or more

- 12 note the difference between urban sectors based on different 'export-base' development as between agricultural and mineral foundations
- 13 note the difference between urban sectors with longer and shorter traditions of settlement between north/west and south/east Africa
- 14 i.e. from the point of view of their impact on structural transformation
- 15 for a definition and expansion on the theme of 'intermediate centres' see the authors forthcoming monograph on this subject
- 16 for an analysis of this problem of marginal urban investment see a forthcoming paper in this series, No. 155.
- 17 note the previous discussion of conservative and radical urbanisation

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